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"MOTION FOR APPOINTED COUNSEL TO ASSIST
IN 2255 CASE MOTION AND
BRIEF/MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF
MOTION BY BRIAN DAVID HILL."

by Brian David Hill

Case no. 1:13-cr-435-1; civil no. 1:22-CV-00074

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Presumed Guilty

How in the blink of an eye Richard Jewell's world was turned inside out

BY SCOTT FREEMAN - DECEMBER 1, 1996



Illustration by Jeremy White

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Overzealous.

That adjective haunted Richard Jewell long before he became known as the FBI's leading suspect in the Centennial Olympic Park bombing on July 27, 1996.

Even as a kid Jewell seemed driven by some deep-seated need to always do more than he was asked.

Take the instance at Towers High School, in Dekalb County. One morning he spied a new teacher walking across the parking lot, struggling to carry two cardboard boxes full of books. He went bouncing across the lawn and walked up to the social studies instructor with a smile on his face. "Can I help you, sir?" he asked, grabbing one of the boxes and leading Richard Muska to his classroom.

Unlike many of the other students, Richard would come to Muska's room between classes and pal around, telling stories and jokes. His friendliness didn't strike Muska as calculating. Above all, he believed Richard was genuine — a good kid, always willing to help.

But by the time he became a cop, 11 years later, it was Jewell's zeal to please that often became his betrayer.

Like the time he was moonlighting as a security officer at a DeKalb County apartment complex and went to break up a late-night party at a hot tub. He could have called the cops and waited for them, but instead, he went to break it up himself and wound up getting arrested for impersonating a police officer.

Or the time he was deputy sheriff in Habersham County and, he would later say, noticed a car pulling out from behind a building. It looked suspicious, so he took off after and wound up crashing his patrol car. Not only that, but the sheriff was skeptical of this story and busted him down to guard duty in the county jail. Instead, he quit the force.

Then there's the time he was working security for Piedmont College. It didn't take him long to aggravate the college brass, issuing tickets off-campus on the main highway and writing long, detailed reports on seemingly minor incidents and suggesting undercover investigations. They wound up asking for his resignation.

Then he landed a job as a security guard in the AT&T Global Village, in Centennial Olympic Park. Beneath a bench, yards away from the entrance to the light and sound tower where he was stationed, he spotted a knapsack that contained a bomb. It exploded, killing a woman and injuring 111; but without Jewell's discovery the numbers could have been staggering. For three days Jewell was the toast of Atlanta, of the country, even the world.

For a moment it seemed that Richard Jewell's zeal had finally served him right. Then, in the blink of an eye, everything went wrong. The blaring headline on Tuesday, July 30, 1996, said it all: **FBI SUSPECTS 'HERO' GUARD MAY HAVE PLANTED BOMB.**

Before the Olympic bombing made his name a household word, Richard Allensworth Jewell had lived about as anonymous a life as possible. "Unremarkable," is the way Habersham County Attorney Robb Kiker describes Jewell's five-year tenure as a deputy sheriff in that county. "In fact, when this happened, I had to think for five minutes just to bring to mind which officer he was," says Kiker.

Jewell, 33, was born in Danville, Va. But little is known of his time there. Reporters for the *Danville Register & Bee* combed through old telephone books and city directories looking for listings of the Jewell family. They checked other likely sources; tax records, marriage records, death records, the real estate register. Nothing.

A spokesman for the schools could not confirm if Jewell was ever a student. Records at Dan River — the city's largest employer — didn't show that anyone by the name of Jewell had ever worked at the mill during the 1960s, the time the family presumably lived there. In a story headlines **SUSPECT'S LINK TO DANVILLE STILL A MYSTERY**, the reporters for the *Register* mused, "Did Richard Jewell ever sleep here?"

The lack of information didn't stop the media frenzy. The Danville mayor held a press conference and answered such questions as whether the city could "live down the infamy" if Jewell were charged for the bombing. "...If the man left Danville at age 6, we could not be accused of having nurtured him," the mayor responded.

An only child, Jewell has "basically been separated from his father for a number of years," according to Jack Martin, Jewell's defense lawyer. He is very close to his mother, and moved with her to Atlanta when he was 6. She works for Sedgwick James of Georgia insurance company, where she was recently the firm's employee of the year.

Jewell went to Towers High School, in Dekalb County, and was one of those quiet students that few seem to notice or remember. In the 1982 school annual, Jewell's senior year, he is mentioned in neither the class prophecy nor the senior directory. In fact, some of his high school classmates and teachers didn't even realize they had gone to school with "*that* Richard Jewell" until a reporter contacted them.

But for his former teacher, Richard Muska, Jewell did stand out. "He was a shining star," says Muska. "He was always a kid willing to help, and in the late 1970s that was very peculiar.

"He was a kid who didn't get involved in the negative things. He was very upset at anything that was disorderly around the school. At the time, there was racial tension, and there were flare-ups. And he'd come in my room and he'd shake his head and say, 'That's not right,' and we'd talk about it. He was a good kid, and back in that time there were darned few good kids."

Jewell was not a complicated person. "He was never devious in any way," says Muska. "If anybody was going to grow up to be a good old boy, it was Richard. I say that as a compliment to Southerners. This kid was a product of the rural South living on the edge of the big city."

Jewell graduated from Towers High in 1982 and worked in a variety of

jobs, including as a supply room clerk for the U.S. Small Business Administration. It was there he met Watson Bryant, who was then a lawyer at the agency. They became quick friends, rendezvousing nearly every afternoon during their lunch break in the arcade at the CNN Center, manning video destroyers and waging battle with alien ships.

Jewell's nickname was "Radar." Bryant says he was that efficient at his job — that prescient, that willing to make the extra effort, just like his namesake, Radar O'Reilly, from *MASH*." Richard has always done the best he could at whatever the assigned task was, and he usually did it better than everybody wanted him to do it," says Bryant, who now serves as Jewell's lawyer.

He was quickly promoted to supervisor of the supply room and the mail room. Working in the division that specialized in making disaster loans across the Southeast and Midwest, Jewell would often have to get a supply truck ready at a moment's notice to go to a field office. "Here comes Radar," his boss would say. "This is what I need, Radar." And no matter how obscure an item, Richard Jewell would find it.

Being a cop was always an ambition for Jewell, and in 1990 he landed a job in Habersham County as a jailer, the entry-level position in the sheriff's department. His eagerness to please had served him well as a supply clerk. But once he began working in law enforcement, it began to lead him to trouble.

At the same time he went to work with the sheriff's department, Jewell also moonlighted as a security guard at the DeKalb County apartment complex where he lived.

Early in the morning on May 26, 1990, he received complaints about rowdiness at a hot tub in the complex. Jewell armed himself with a 9 mm handgun, picked up his handcuffs, and went to investigate. When he found the two people responsible, he identified himself as a

Habersham County deputy sheriff and placed a 22-year old man under arrest for public drunkenness and creating an offensive condition.

In the process, he got into a scuffle with the suspect, who, in the words of the prosecutor in the case, “was beaten up by Mr. Jewell, not seriously enough to require medical treatment.” More troubling, Jewell was not even a certified officer; he was just a jailer with no power to arrest anyone. Instead, he was arrested himself by DeKalb County Police for impersonating a police officer.

Watson Bryant now calls it a misunderstanding. “The guy attacked Richard, and he had to put him on the ground and sit on him,” says Bryant. “Richard was wearing a hat that said he was a deputy sheriff in Habersham County; he *was* a deputy sheriff, assigned to the jail. He called the police, and for whatever reason, he and the DeKalb cop didn’t get along — the guy’s got to show Richard who’s in charge and charges him with impersonating an officer for doing his job as a security guard.”

Over 70 residents of the apartment complex signed a letter in support of Jewell, according to a court transcript, and his lawyer told the court that his client was only trying to be a “very zealous protector” of the people living there. “I think the police felt like he was being overzealous,” the lawyer said, using the adjective that has come to haunt Jewell in his law enforcement career.

The prosecutor, Elisabeth MacNamara, found the incident disturbing enough to suggest that Jewell was overzealous to the point he might be off-balance. “The primary concern, as I gathered from everyone involved in this case, is that Mr. Jewell may need to be evaluated for some form of mental health treatment,” she told the court.

Jewell pleaded guilty to the reduced charge of disorderly conduct. He was placed on probation and ordered to undergo a psychological evaluation.

In part because the charge was dropped from felony to misdemeanor, he was able to keep his position as a jailor in Habersham County and months later be promoted to a full-fledged deputy sheriff. "He'd work 12-hour shifts, go home, shower, then come back to work and ride with a day deputy," former deputy Randy Bowden told *Newsweek*.

Then, in 1995, Jewell crashed his county cruiser while, he claimed, giving chase to a suspicious vehicle. When the sheriff doubted his account of the accident and demoted him back to jailer, Jewell resigned.

From there he took a job working security at Piedmont College, in Demorest. College officials later told reporters that Jewell was overzealous, writing long and detailed reports on minor incidents and issuing traffic tickets on the main highway, well beyond the campus boundary. In an Aug. 1 story in *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* headlined A BAD MAN TO CROSS ON HIS BEAT, students were also quoted as saying that Jewell went to extremes.

"He was very macho, and he could get very belligerent," Piedmont College junior Nikki Lane said. "I've seen him go from calm to angry, back to calm and back to angry in a matter of seconds."

Jewell told *60 Minutes* that the college's aggravation with him stemmed from their fear that his penchant for making drug and drunk-driving arrests would bring the college unfavorable publicity in the local paper.

Both sides agree that Jewell was asked to resign.

He quickly landed a job working security at Centennial Olympic Park for the Olympic Games. At about the same time he was hired, two members of a right-wing group were arrested in Crawford County and charged with making bombs. Rumors, which later turned out false, turned up in the press that the bombs were intended for the Olympic Games.

"If anything happens during the Olympics," Jewell allegedly remarked to friends, "I want to be in the middle of it."

It became a prophetic statement and, in the eyes of the media and the FBI, one that grew to have sinister implications.

The two feds sank to their knees, flicked on flashlights and dipped under the bench toward the knapsack. Ten feet away, closely watching, was Richard Jewell, along with his supervisor, Bob Ahring, a GBI agent named Tom Davis, who was also working security in Centennial Park, and an AT&T corporate security officer.

Jewell told Ahring (who recounted this chronology to Atlanta magazine) that his attention has been drawn by a group of four kids who were drinking while gathered at a bench near the light and sound tower where he was stationed. They looked underage, and, Jewell had told his supervisor, he had flagged down Davis (who declined to be interviewed for this story), and they had walked toward the bench to investigate.

The kids got up to leave, Jewell explained to Ahring, and that's when he spotted the knapsack sitting underneath the bench, next to a fence; Jewell said he and Davis called out to the kids to ask if they had forgotten their bag. He explained that the kids said it didn't belong to them and seemed to quicken their pace before disappearing into the crowd.

By all accounts, Jewell and Davis didn't go to see what was inside the knapsack or find out whether it had a name tag — you didn't toy with packages that didn't seem to have an owner. Instead, Jewell had radioed Ahring, an assistant chief of police from Blue Springs, Mo., who supervised the 36-member night shift security force, while Davis had called Centennial Park's bomb squad.

Now one of the bomb experts was reaching out to the knapsack. He very carefully opened a flap, focused his flashlight and then leaned forward to peer inside. For a moment he simply froze. Then, almost simultaneously, both feds scrambled backward, out from under the bench and away from the knapsack. They stood up and didn't even take the time to turn around they just kept going backward. Up to where Jewell, Ahring, Davis, and the other man were waiting. And then on past them.

The four men understood immediately: This is real. This is a bomb.

Ahring caught up with one of the feds. "What have we got?"

"It's big," he replied, obviously shaken.

"How big?"

"Real big," the fed said as he pulled out a cell phone.

"Do we need to evacuate?" Ahring asked.

The fed vigorously nodded his head as he dialed a number.

It was close to 1:10 a. m., July 27, 1996. About 10 minutes left.

They moved quickly the moments before the blast. The first thing Ahring did was send Jewell to the light and sound tower with orders to evacuate everyone. Meanwhile, Tom Davis radioed his command post for state troopers to help move people away from the tower. There was a crowd on the grass directly in front of the knapsack; Davis and Ahring went there first.

"We've got a suspicious package back by the tower," Ahring told people, "We're trying to isolate it, Would you please step away from this area?" He purposefully didn't mention the word bomb; the last thing they needed was a panic, Fortunately, everybody cooperated

and began moving back.

Jewell hustled 11 people out of the light and sound tower, literally pushing some of them out. Then he went outside to help the others evacuate the crowd. He kept telling them to get back. Move away from the area, please. But many of them refused, stubbornly staying at the benches near the tower.

When the bomb exploded, Bob Ahring was just 10 yards away. The concussion knocked him forward six feet and sent him sprawling on the ground. There was smoke everywhere. And the smell of gunpowder. But what Bob Ahring will remember most is the sound. Then there was a sudden deathly quiet throughout the park: And he could hear the whistle of shrapnel whizzing away from the light and sound tower through the air toward the crowd.

It was the eeriest thing he'd ever heard in his life.

Ahring could see two civilians down just in front of him. He looked back over his shoulder. He saw several state troopers down on the other side of the tower. More civilians, too. And in the minutes following the blast, Ahring saw Richard Jewell tending to the fallen.

In the aftermath, Jewell became a celebrated hero. He was on CNN. On the *Today* show, *USA Today* interviewed him. He came across as shy and polite to a fault, punctuating most sentences with “Yes, sir,” or “Yes, ma’am.”

Four days later the world turned inside out, and he became the focus of the FBI investigation. For the media it was too sexy to resist: Hero turns suspect.

When the *Atlanta Journal* broke the story late that following Tuesday afternoon, it set off an avalanche of attention. Under the hypothetical

FBI scenario, Jewell had planted the knapsack and then rushed to a bank of pay phones a couple of blocks away from Centennial Olympic Park and placed a 911 call to warn police of the bomb. He then raced back to the light and sound tower, “discovered” the bomb and heroically moved people out of harm’s way.

The media quickly all but pronounced him guilty.

“Richard Jewell, 33, a former law enforcement officer, fits the profile of the lone bomber,” wrote Kathy Scruggs and Ron Martz in the second paragraph of a story in an “Extra” edition of *The Atlanta Journal* on July 30, 1996. “This profile generally includes a frustrated white man who is a former police officer, member of the military or police ‘wanna-be’ who seeks to become a hero.

“Jewell has become a celebrity in the wake of the bombing, making an appearance this morning at the reopened park with Katie Couric on the *Today* show. He also has approached newspapers, including *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, seeking publicity for his actions.”

NBC’s Tom Brokaw told viewers, “The speculation is that the FBI is close to ‘making the case,’ in their language. They probably have enough to arrest him right now, probably enough to prosecute him, but you always want to have enough to convict him as well. There are still some holes in this case.”

The FBI spent most of Wednesday, Aug. 1, combing through the apartment of Jewell’s mother, where he was staying during the Olympics, They rifled through Barbara Jewell’s undergarments and carted out box after box of potential evidence, including her set of Tupperware and 22 Walt Disney tapes. Jewell sat on the steps outside his apartment in humiliation and in full view of the phalanx of media encamped in the parking lot of the Buford Highway apartment complex.

AJC columnist Dave Kindred, in his second column on Jewell in two days, compared the scene to the time law enforcement officers sought evidence against Wayne Williams, the man convicted of two murders in Atlanta's missing children case when "federal agents came to this town to deal with another suspect who lived with his mother. Like this one, that suspect was drawn to the blue lights and sirens of police work. Like this one, he became famous in the aftermath of murder."

Kindred later offered a spirited defense of his column, saying he was comparing scenes, not characters. «The column was a comparison of the media frenzy more than it was a comparison of Richard Jewell and Wayne Williams,» he says. "Also, I quoted a neighbor in the column, saying Jewell is a good fellow, and I said the FBI has done this before and come up empty."

Meanwhile, Jewell's past was quickly put under a microscope; Jewell was villainized and vilified. Even Jay Leno joked about him on *The Tonight Show*, calling him the "Una-doofus."

Then, as the weeks passed with no arrest, a debate ignited within the journalistic community. Had everyone overreacted? Had the FBI used them to put pressure on their main suspect in the hope of breaking him into a confession? Should they have more vigorously challenged the FBI to produce evidence before trumpeting Jewell's name and his past? Many thought the answers were all yes.

"I think the media's performance has been downright embarrassing," says Howard Kurtz, a media critic for *The Washington Post*. "Every news organization in the country has contributed to ruining this guy's life without the faintest idea of whether he's guilty or innocent."

At particular issue was the original *Atlanta Journal* article printed in the "Extra" edition, with the big, bold headline on Page 1, FBI SUSPECTS 'HERO' GUARD MAY HAVE PLANTED BOMB. The article contained no attribution and quoted no sources, leaving the reader to wonder whether the claims came from a legitimate law enforcement

official or from a proclamation of God.

"I find it appalling, quite frankly, at how quickly everybody leapt to finger this guy," says David Shaw, the media writer at the *Los Angeles Times*. "To write about it in the context of a larger story about the explosion, down in the sixth or eighth paragraph —that's one thing. But to bring out a special edition and start leading your newscast and putting out Page 1 stories on it — that's over the top."

Earl Casey, CNN's domestic managing editor, defends the overall coverage. CNN quickly followed the *AJC* in naming Jewell as a suspect, and Casey says remembering the context of the event is important. A TWA jet had just crashed near Long Island, and a bomb was suspected. There was an extreme fear of terrorism at the Olympic Games. The international media was gathered in Atlanta. Then the bomb exploded in the park intended as the center of the Olympic celebration.

And by that point Jewell was already famous. "Had this been some anonymous bloke, would his name have emerged? Maybe not," says Casey. "Maybe the stories that day would have read that law enforcement are considering a security guard without the identity. But I think it's difficult for journalists at a distance or on the academic level to really make value judgments on this thing. They're often right in theory, but when you get down to the application, something in that theory falls apart."

The same could be said for the initial FBI theories about Jewell's role in the bombing.

The FBI's Jewell-as-the-lone-bomber theory was quickly shattered when it proved impossible for him to have made the 911 bomb threat from a bank of pay phones two blocks away from Centennial Olympic Park, an estimated five- to eight-minute walk. The 911 call was placed at 12:58 a.m., at 12:57 Jewell was standing in front of the light and sound

tower with Tom Davis as Davis radioed for the bomb squad. And Jewell stayed in the area in front of dozens of witnesses until the bomb went off.

In addition, the voice of the 911 caller was described as a white male with no discernible accent. Anyone who heard Jewell speak immediately noticed his slow Southern drawl. And although the *AJC* had breathlessly stated that Jewell approached the paper seeking publicity, it turns out he didn't.

CNN was the first to interview Jewell in the aftermath of the bombing, and Earl Casey says it took them "20 or 30 calls and a lot of shoe leather" to secure the interview with him. Because Jewell worked for a security company subcontracted through AT&T, a media relations specialist for AT&T named Bryant Steele eventually began fielding the requests Jewell was receiving for interviews.

Steele spent the Sunday afternoon after the bombing with Jewell. The security guard didn't seem especially giddy that he was going to be on CNN and the *Today* show; as much as anything else, he seemed dutiful about it. When Steele told him that *USA Today* also wanted to talk to him, Jewell quietly replied, "Yes,sir, that'll be fine."

Steele says he decided to contact the *AJC* as a courtesy to the local paper, to let them know Jewell was available if they wanted to interview him, and Jewell's lawyers say that Jewell himself never called the paper. That contention was eventually and went unchallenged by the editors.

Kathy Scruggs declined comment on her coverage of Jewell; citing a gag order imposed by her editors. Ron Martin, the *AJC*'s editor, declined to be interviewed for this story, saying the paper expects to be the target of a libel suit from Jewell. "Everything we have to say, we're putting in the newspaper," he said. In a statement prepared for *60 Minutes* in September and provided to *Atlanta* magazine, Martin wrote, "Our reporters have done an excellent job of reporting fairly,

fully and accurately everything we can learn about the bombing and how the investigation is progressing. We stand proudly behind our coverage." In mid-October the Sunday *AJC* reprinted an article from *American Journalism Review* that took a critical look at the Jewell coverage.

The telephone rang in Ahring's hotel room the Tuesday afternoon after the bombing. Centennial Olympic Park had been closed while federal investigators combed for clues; it had reopened that morning."Yes, sir, it's Richard Jewell. I'd heard you were hurt and wanted to know if you were all right," he asked his supervisor, who recalled the conversation for Atlanta Magazine.

Ahring hadn't even noticed until later that he had taken shrapnel hits on the left shoulder and in the lower left leg. "I'm fine," he told Jewell. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, sir," Jewell responded.

By then Jewell's role in discovering the bomb was well known; just that morning he'd been on the Today show with Katie Couric. But now Jewell was eager to get back to work. The two men chatted for a few minutes, and as they were about to hang up, Jewell told Ahring, "I'll see you at work this evening, sir."

By 6 o'clock, when he was supposed to be reporting to work, Jewell was at the FBI offices. The agents told him they wanted his help; they were going to make a training film on bomb scare response techniques. Jewell believed them. Only when the news reports put Jewell on notice that he was a suspect, The New York Times subsequently reported, did the FBI decide to advise him of his rights,

While it is always convenient to bash the media, it was, after all, the FBI that targeted Jewell and then whispered his name to reporters calling in from all over the country.

The FBI continued to count Jewell as a suspect into October. He lived under virtual house arrest, followed by an almost comical convoy of undercover federal officers that trailed him wherever he went. Jewell's lawyers demanded that the FBI either charge him or else clear him and apologize.

"My gut reaction, based on 47 years of lawyering, tells me the case against Jewell is total bullshit," Summerville defense lawyer Bobby Lee Cook said early in the investigation. "The FBI is caught up in psychological profiles and decided he fit and jumped on him."

For Jack Martin, the lesson to be learned is that the news media has to be more skeptical of what law enforcement tells them, "It didn't take me long to find out that it was impossible for him to make the 911 call," he says, "Didn't take me long to find out that this man has friends and is gregarious and isn't a loner like the profile,"

Jewell's lawyers are preparing a bevy of lawsuits, targeting everyone from the *AJC* to NBC's Tom Brokaw. "I can almost assure you *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* will be sued by December," said Watson Bryant as autumn approached, 'We want to give them a Christmas present. I'd love to do for their reputation what they did to Richard's. Because they damned well deserve it."

Some think it is doubtful Jewell can ever win a lawsuit against the FBI, even if he's never charged. "He'll be thrown out [of court]," says Cook "I might be jumping the gun, but I think there is a moral to this: The FBI and federal agencies can set out recklessly to ruin someone and effectively do it, and there's really not an adequate cause of action to put your name and your character back into place. I see that as a very frightening thing."

For Richard Muska, who now teaches at Chamblee High School, the rush to judgment is forcing a reassessment of his own beliefs about the American system and how he presents it to his students. When he first saw the headlines, he told himself, "No, not this kid." He wrote a letter of protest to both the *AJC* and the FBI.

"I was the civics teacher," Muska says. "I'm the guy that got up in front of the class and said, 'This is the best country in the world, where you get justice and freedom.' And to see this happen to Richard — he's obviously been singled out and made a scapegoat for a government agency that couldn't do their job right — that really hurts."

On a Saturday afternoon in late October, almost three months to the day of the Centennial Olympic Park bombing, U.S. Attorney Kent Alexander met Jack Martin at a Virginia-Highland coffee shop and handed over a letter that flatly stated Richard Jewell was no longer a target of the FBI investigation. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* printed seven stories in its following day's edition, dissecting everything about the case except its own role in starting the media lynching of the hero turned suspect.

One day later, on October 28, Richard Jewell made perhaps his last run through the media gauntlet when he walked with his lawyers into a roomful of reporters gathered at a hotel conference room in north Atlanta. "The public trial in the media of Richard Jewell is over, and the verdict is not guilty," said Lin Wood, a lawyer who will handle the civil suits Jewell intends to file.

"We're glad the emperor has finally admitted he has no clothes," added Watson Bryant. When asked if he was disappointed the FBI had offered no apology, Bryant paused and smiled ruefully. "They don't have the guts to apologize," he responded. "And that is a sad situation when they can't say, 'We're sorry.' There was not one bit of evidence, and look at what they did to him. It's unbelievable. This investigation

was like a freight train; once it got started, it wouldn't stop."

Moments later, dressed in slacks and a cream-colored dress shirt with blue stripes, Jewell stood up and at last addressed the very same cameras that had stalked him for three months. "This is the first time I have ever asked you to turn the cameras on me," he said. "You know my name, but you do not really know who I am.... For 88 days I lived a nightmare.... I felt like a hunted animal followed constantly, waiting to be killed.... In their mad rush to fulfill their own personal agendas, the FBI and the media almost destroyed me and my mother. ... The media said I was an overzealous officer. That was a lie. I always performed my job to the best of my ability and gave 110 percent. That's not being overzealous. That's being dedicated.... I am going to try to re-enter law enforcement.... I love helping people. That's what I do, that's what I have done, and that's what I want to continue to do in the future."

Before he concluded, Richard Jewell put down his prepared statement. He paused for a moment and then looked directly at the cameras. His voice turned strong, as though it was resonating for the very first time.

"I am an innocent man," he said.

This article originally appeared in our December 1996 issue.

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